Steps for safe-keeping of Ammunition

580. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether according to the 21 st Report of the Standing Committee on Defence, ammunition worth hundreds of crores of rupees belonging to the Ministry of Defence has been kept for years in a highly unsafe manner, posing a grave risk to human life and causing a huge loss to the exchequer;

(b) whether it is a fact that out of 4.5 metric tones of ammunition about 0.93 lakh metric tones is still kept in the open, covered only by tarpaulin or kept under a tent; and

(c) the action Government propose to take for safe conservation of ammunition?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) In the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Defence in respect of Serial No, 8, Para No. 57, the comments of the Committee are as under:

"The Committee note that during the last ten years, the country has lost approximately Rs. 812 crores due to 13 major incidents of fire in Ordnance/Ammunition Depots. The Committee are perturbed to learn that the ammunition worth hundreds of crore of rupees is being kept in highly improper and unsafe manner, sometimes lying in the open even without a tarpaulin cover, posing a grave risk to human life and avoidable huge financial loss to the exchequer".

The authorization of ammunition in the Army is approximately 5 lakh Metric Tones (MT) and current holding of ammunition is 4,17,101 MT. As against the present authorization and holding, the availability of storage of ammunition is for 4,07,268 MT, leaving 9833 MT ammunition in open, under tarpaulin or under tentage. Only such ammunition, which is less prone to deterioration, is being stored on open plinths covered by tarpaulin.

The Government has taken up a massive programme for construction of ammunition storge. Rs. 1042 crores have been sanctioned since 1998. The works are in progress and at various stages of execution. The progress on construction of ammunition works in being monitores under the chairmanship of Master General of Ordnance (MGO) on a quarterly basis, at Army Headquarters.